CLAIMS

1. A method, for use in a user computer system including a pointing device and a visual display unit, for providing a graphical user interface to a computer program for displaying search results from a search conducted in a hierarchical data set, the method comprising:

receiving search results from a search query of a hierarchical data set; and

displaying on a user screen, a graphical representation parent categories for search results wherein the search results appear within their respective parent categories.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

selecting a parent category from the display on the user screen; and

displaying on the user screen a graphical representation of the search results in the selected parent category in the context of the search results respective first uncommon level of subcategories.

3. A method of presenting search results, comprising:

receiving search results from a database;

organizing the search results by category; and

graphically displaying a three-dimensional representation the search results within at least one category icon, the category icon representing a category to which search results belong, wherein the downward paths to a search result is implied by graphical positioning of search results within a category icon.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising:

representing the search results displayed within the category icon as category

member icons.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
distinguishing between categories to which the displayed category member icons by at least one of shape, color and sound, in accordance with a subcategory to which less than all of the displayed category member icons within a category icon belong.

6. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
selecting a category member icon; and
generating a perceptible excerpt relating to the selected category member icon comprising at least one of textual, aural, imagery or video data.

7. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
representing the search results as a number appearing within the category icon, the number representing the quantity of data elements from the search results that fall within the category represented by the category icon.

8. The method of claim 3, further comprising:
representing on the user screen, all data elements appearing within the search results.

9. The method of claim 3 further comprising:
A simple API comprising a category path and a URL for each data element in the search result.

10. The method of claim 4 further comprising:
displaying explicit downward path information representing the downward path from the displayed category to a selected data element within the displayed category.

11. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
changing the appearance of a category member icon after the category member icon has been accessed.

12. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
drilling out to directly access a selected category member.

13. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
drilling down to display subcategories for a selected category.

14. The method of claim 8 further comprising:
Zooming in to displayed category member icons;
Enlarging the display space larger than the user display; and
Scanning category member icons across the user screen.

15. The method of claim 3 wherein the size of the category icons is proportional to the number of search results within the category.

16. The method of claim 4, further comprising:
accessing a category icon;
changing the appearance of the viewed icon to indicate at least one of the icon has

been access or the icon should be accessed again.

17. The method of claim 4, further comprising:

Deriving the numerical relevance rank for a search result data element from the data element's position within a search results list; and

Displaying the data element's numerical relevance rank within the category member icon representing the data element.

18. A method of presenting search results, comprising:

receiving search results from a database;

organizing the search results by category;

graphically displaying a three-dimensional representation the search results within at least one category icon, the category icon representing a category to which search results belong, wherein the downward paths to a search result is implied by graphical positioning of search results within a category icon;

representing the search results displayed within the category icon as category member icons; and

distinguishing between categories to which the displayed category member icons by at least one of shape, color and sound, in accordance with a subcategory to which less than all of the displayed category member icons within a category icon belong.

19. A method of presenting search results, comprising:

receiving search results from a database;

organizing the search results by category;

graphically displaying a three-dimensional representation the search results within

at least one category icon, the category icon representing a category to which search results belong, wherein the downward paths to a search result is implied by graphical positioning of search results within a category icon;

representing the search results displayed within the category icon as category member icons;

distinguishing between categories to which the displayed category member icons by at least one of shape, color and sound, in accordance with a subcategory to which less than all of the displayed category member icons within a category icon belong, wherein the size of the category icons is proportional to the number of search results within the category.

20. A method of requesting the display of search results based on the category paths of the search results, the method comprising:

under control of a client system, displaying a search request window; and

in response to the entry and selection of a search request, sending the search request to a server system;

under control of the server system, receiving the request,

having the search conducted by a search engine;

writing GUI script software capable of generating every potential arrangement of matching web sites in the context of their respective parent category and subcategories; and

downloading the GUI script software to the browser software on the client system;

under control of the client system, displaying matching web sites in the context of their respective parent categories, and

upon the user selecting, with a selection device, a parent category, displaying the

matching web sites of the selected parent category in the context of their respective first uncommon level of subcategories.